

**SUMMARY OF THE  
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 10, 2001**

The Transition Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Wednesday, January 10, 2001 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) by teleconference. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Silky Labie of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss whether or not it is feasible to establish a clearinghouse for questions, comments, and disputes concerning the NELAC accreditation process for laboratories and Accrediting Authorities.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Ms. Labie welcomed the attendees and verified the names of those in attendance. The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the committees' last teleconference on December 4, 2000. Ms. Labie updated the progress on the two action items from those minutes, and with a second from a committee member the minutes from December 4, 2000 were accepted with minor corrections.

Ms. Labie announced that the NELAC Board of Directors has scheduled January 24, 2001 as the date to announce the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP)-accredited laboratories on the NELAC Website.

Ms. Labie and Mr. Jerry Parr reported that the "strawman proposal" concerning the NELAC proficiency testing (PT) sample performance requirements had been forwarded to the NELAC Board of Directors and had been accepted by them. Mr. Parr and Mr. Chuck Wibby will verify that the version submitted to the Board of Directors was the final version, so that Ms. Jeanne Hankins, the NELAP Director, can post the document on the NELAC Website.

Ms. Labie introduced the agenda topic, that being the need for a mechanism which would handle questions, resolve complaints, and take suggestions from both the laboratory community and NELAC Accrediting Authorities concerning such topics as the NELAC accreditation process, standard interpretation, and consistency among state programs .

**NEED FOR A CLEARINGHOUSE**

The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to provide a mechanism for laboratories to voice concerns and opinions that is independent of the Accrediting Authorities' evaluation processes. A web-based hotline was one suggestion. More importantly, to whom would comments be sent and how would they be handled? Based on the types of comments that have been received by various committees, it appeared that concerns ranged from incomplete knowledge of the NELAC Standard to disagreements on interpreting the standard and inconsistencies among the State Accrediting Authorities. The committee decided that some sort of clearinghouse must be established to evaluate the complaints and observations and determine how best to handle each comment.

Ms. Labie asked for suggestions concerning the membership of a clearinghouse and possible sponsors or groups that might be willing to assume this responsibility. Several suggestions of how to implement this type of undertaking were voiced by committee members. These ranged from enhancing the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) area on the NELAC Website to the formation of a NELAC dispute resolution committee. Several committee members were quick to suggest Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB), the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB), the Accrediting Authority Work Group (AAWG) and the NELAC On-site Assessment Committee as potential groups that could sponsor or oversee a clearinghouse. There were comments concerning the structure of this type of website including the type of information that would be gathered from questionnaires and the legalities of using the NELAC Website for such purposes. Ms. Labie will contact Ms. Hankins about expanding the NELAC Website for this purpose. She will also reiterate the need for a mechanism to respond to education questions on the NELAC Standard and their interpretations. The same mechanism would also be available for the submission of requests for conflict resolution, and possibly arbitration between accrediting authorities and laboratories.

The committee identified the duties and responsibilities that a clearinghouse for NELAC accredited laboratories and accrediting authorities would need to perform. Included is the need to evaluate incoming feedback from all sources into topic areas such as education, arbitration, or interpretation. The committee saw these areas as most essential so these will be the basis for the proposed need for such a clearinghouse. Ms. Labie will draft recommendations concerning the concept of a clearinghouse, the specific responsibilities, and potential groups to sponsor the formation of a clearinghouse for review by the committee with the intention of forwarding them to the NELAC Board of Directors for their consideration.

### **DEVELOPING A QUESTIONNAIRE**

The committee agreed that a post-accreditation questionnaire for the NELAC laboratories would be beneficial to NELAC and to the accrediting authorities as well. Such a questionnaire would be useful in determining the state of NELAC accreditations and how well the NELAC Standard is doing in the field. Ms. Deborah Loring was asked to draft a questionnaire using some proposed questions from committee members. She was also asked to gather input from other commercial sources as to what types of questions are important to the laboratories. Dr. Ken Jackson suggested that an appraisal form for laboratories that is included in the New York accreditation package might also be helpful; Ms. Loring acknowledged that she would use that information as well. The issue of who would be able to distribute this questionnaire was not resolved but tabled until the next scheduled meeting, although ELAB was mentioned and seemed the likely candidate for such a request.

### **FUTURE TELECONFERENCES AND ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Labie called for any further discussion on current topics or new business. With no further comments offered from those in attendance she turned the discussion to scheduling future teleconferences to further progress on current issues. The committee decided on two mutually acceptable dates and times, those being February 15, 2001 from 1-3:00 p.m. (EST) and March 15, 2001 from 1-3:00 p.m. (EST). Ms. Labie then adjourned the meeting.

**ACTION ITEMS  
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 10, 2001**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Ms. Labie will draft a recommendation for the addition of a clearinghouse for questions and arbitration for NELAC accredited laboratories and accrediting authorities to the NELAC website	2/15/01
2.	Address the lack of secondary application package requirements in the NELAC Standards	Ongoing
3.	Ms. Loring will draft a questionnaire to NELAC accredited laboratories concerning the process of their NELAC accreditation and where that process might be improved	2/15/01

**PARTICIPANTS  
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 10, 2001**

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